Department of State TELEG
EXCISE (36) E
B1, EC

CONFIDENTIAL

AN: D760311-0401

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BUENOS 05298 121729Z

13-11
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCCT-01 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 /031 W
---------- 103017
R 121604Z AUG 76
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6716

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 5298

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: SUNDAY AFTERNOON WITH THE TRIPLE A

1. SUMMARY. NOTED POLITICAL COMMENTATOR, TV PERSONALITY, AND COLUMNIST MARIANO GRONDONA WAS KIDNAPPED FOR FOUR HOURS ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 8, BY WHAT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN THE INFAMOUS ARGENTINE ANTI-COMMUNIST ALLIANCE (TRIPLE A). HE AND HIS WIFE WERE RELEASED UNHARMED AFTER WHAT AMOUNTED TO A TRIPLE A PRESS CONFERENCE APPARENTLY INTENDED TO OUTLINE TRIPLE A VIEWS OF CURRENT ARGENTINE SITUATION TO PROMINENT MEMBER OF PRESS. FOLLOWING IS MEANT AS MUCH TO CONVEY SOMETHING OF CURRENT LOCAL COLORAND LIFE IN ARGENTINA AS TO REPORT ON APPARENT VIEWS OF EXTREMIST TERRORISTS OF THE POLITICAL RIGHT. END SUMMARY.

2. MARIANO GRONDONA, WELL-KNOWN TO AND WELL-REGARDED BY THIS EMBASSY, IS A PROMINENT COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA POLITICALCOMMENTATOR WHOSE PERSONAL VIEWS ARE MODERATELY LIBERAL. HE WAS CRITICAL OF THE PREVIOUS PERON REGIME AND HAS BEEN (CAREFULLY) CRITICAL OF THE CURRENT MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA. BY MONDAY AUG 9 THE STORY OF HIS KIDNAPPING WAS IN CIRCULATION, AND AT LUNCH WITH EMBOFFS AUG 11 HE TOLD FULL STORY OF HIS EXPERIENCE.

3. HE AND HIS WIFE WERE ACCOSTED BY ARMED MAN AS THEY GOT OUT OF CAR AT TENNIS CLUB SUNDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 8. THIS INDIVIDUAL FORCED THEM BACK INTO THEIR CAR AND ORDERED

CONFIDENTIAL

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 4/20/82
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

DECLASSIFIED

GRONDONA TO DRIVE OFF. THEY WERE FOLLOWED BY AT LEAST ONE OTHER CAR, AND WHEN WELL AWAY FROM CLUB WERE TRANSFERRED TO THAT CAR. VEHICLE WAS EQUIPPED WITH RADIO TRANSMITTER, AND CAPTORS COMMUNICATED IN CODED TERMS TO AT LEAST ONE OTHER VEHICLE NEARBY. GRONDONA AND WIFE WERE FORCED TO COVER EYES, AND DRIVEN TO UNKNOWN LOCATION WHERE VEHICLE ENTERED UNDERGROUND GARAGE. AT THIS POINT HOODS WERE PUT ON THEM AND THEY WERE TAKEN INTO A BUILDING.

4. BOTH WERE SEATED, WITH HOODS REMOVED, IN ROOM DECORATED WITH PICTURES OF 19TH CENTRY ARGENTINE STRONGMAN ROSAS, ADOLF HITLER, PRIMO DE RIVERA, AND VARIOUS WEAPONS INCLUDING TRIPOD-MOUNTED MACHINEGUN. CAPTORS NUMBERED SOME SEVEN OR EIGHT, AND WERE DESCRIBED BY GRONDONA AS MEN IN THEIR 30S TO 50S, IN REASONABLY NEAT, INFORMAL CIVILIAN DRESS, WHO HE COULD BEST CHARACTERIZE AS "POLICE TYPES." AT VARIOUS TIMES DURING HIS ORDEAL THEY THREATENED HIM WITH DEATH IF HE DID NOT DO EXACTLY AS ORDERED, BUT AT NO TIME DID THEY MAN-HANDLE OR HARM HIM OR HIS WIFE.

5. LEADER OF GROUP TOLD GRONDONA THAT THEY WERE THE TRIPLE A. MOST OF "DISCUSSION" WAS ELABORATION BY CAPTORS OF THEIR VIEWS, RATHER THAN INTERROATION OF GRONDONA. THE SEEMED GENERALLY AWARE OF HIS PUBLIC VIEWS AND DID NOT APPEAR TO CONSIDER HIM A DANGEROUS LEFTIST. GRONDONA ADJUSTED QUICKLY TO SITUATION (AS DID HIS REMARKEDLY COMPOSED WIFE) AND DID HIS BEST TO CARRY ON DISCUSSION WITHOUT SAYING ANYTHING TO OFFEND HIS HOSTS. TWO BAD MOMENTS CAME WHEN HE REFERRED TO TRIPLE A LINKS WITH FORMER MIN OF SOCIAL WELFARE LOPEZ REGA, WHO IS WIDELY SUPPOSED TO HAVE SUPPORTED TRIPLE A DURING PREVIOUS PERON GOVERNMENT, AND WHEN HE NOTED TRIPLE A LINKS WITH (RIGHTIST) UNIONS. ON BOTH OCCASIONS CAPTORS WERE OUTRAGED. THEY CASTIGATED LOPEZ REGA FOR HAVING DAMAGED IMAGE OF TRIPLE A, AND REACTED WITH HORROR AT SUGGESTION OF ANY TIE AT ALL WITH "UNIONS."

6. CAPTORS SEVERELY CRITICZED CURRENT LEADERS OF GOA, THE VIDELA-VIOLA ELEMENT, AS "WEAK;" DWELLED REPEATEDLY AND AT LENGTH ON LEFTIST INFLUENCES IN CATHOLIC CHURCH; ATTACKED ECONOMIC POLICIES OF GOA; AND INSISTED ON THE EXISTENCE OF

DECLASSIFIED

DECLASSIFIED

EXCISE

THE INTERNATIONAL PLOT OF JEWS, MARXISTS, ETC., TO TAKEOVER THE WORLD. GRONDONA FOUND THE LEVEL OF INTELLECT OF HIS CAPTORS RATHER LOW, AND THEIR ARGUMENTS UNSOPHISTICATED AND CONTRADICTORY. HE FELT THEY WERE MOST SERIOUS, HOWEVER, ABOUT THEIR CAUSE, AND WAS CONVINCED THAT THEY WOULD KILL WITHOUT HESTIATION OR COMPUNCTION IF THEY FELT IT NECESSARY. LEADER TOLD GRONDONA TRIPE A INTENDS TO LAUNCH ALL-OUT CAMPAIGN AGAINST "ENEMIES OF COUNTRY" AND WILL "MAKE BLOOD RUN IN THE STREETS."

7. LEADER OF GROUP TOLD GRONDONA THAT HE HAD DECIDED TO LEAD THE "OPERATION" TO KIDNAP GRONDONA RATHER THAN ENTRUST IT TO SOME OF HIS MEN WHO TENDED TO REACT TOO QUICKLY, WITH "NEGATIVE EFFECTS" UPON THEIR VICTIMS.

8. AFTER ABOUT FOUR HOURS IN TOTAL, THE GRONDONAS, WITH EYES COVERED, WERE TAKEN ON THE REVERSE ROUTE TO THEIR CAR AND RELEASED. NO THREATS WERE MADE ABOUT THEIR FUTURE CONDUCT OR ABOUT REPORTING THE KIDNAPPING TO THE POLICE.

9. AT LUNCH WITH EMBOFFS, GRONDONA HAD COME DIRECTLY FROM POLICE STATION IN DOWNTOWN AREA WHERE HE HAD TRIED TO REPORT KIDNAPPING. POLICE WERE UNINTERESTED, AND SUGGESTED THAT HE MAKE HIS COMPLAINT TO THE STATION HAVING JURIDSDICTION OVER THE AREA WHERE HE WAS FIRST CAPTURED. HE APPEARS TO BE UNDECIDED AS TO WHETHER HE WILL EVEN BOTHER TO PURSUE THE MATTER. IN RETROSPECT, HE FINDS AMUSING ASPECTS IN EXPERIENCE, IS ENORMOUSLY PROUD OF HIS WIFE'S BEHAVIOR, AND OBVIOUSLY ENJOYS RELATING THE STORY TO HIS AUDIENCES. AT THE TIME, HE ADMITS, IT WAS NOT FUNNY AT ALL AND HE ASSUMED THAT HE AND HIS WIFE WERE IN GRAVE DANGER OF DEATH, OR THAT HE MIGHT BE SEVERELY BEATEN AS OTHER KIDNAPPED JOURNALISTS HAVE BEEN.

BI, EC

0910507090

DECLASSIFIED

CASE, BUT GRONDONA BELIEVES THAT IF HE HAD TRIED TO
RSIST, OR IF SOME ACCIDENT HAD UPSET HIS KIDNAPPERS,
HE WOULD BE DEAD.
CHAPLIN

CONFIDENTIAL

0010000000